

L. L. Benson


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Gustavus Smith Benson

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G. S. Benson

GUSTAVUS SMITH BENSON

BORN 23D SEPTEMBER, 1806

DIED 22D MARCH, 1883

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IT has not seemed necessary to print here an extended biographical sketch of Gustavus S. Benson, inasmuch as the Memorial Discourse of his friend and pastor, Dr. Breed, contains in itself a sufficient review of the outward circumstances of his life.

And yet the story there told is necessarily the more public side of a life that presented its loveliest individuality to the household, whether his father's family, or, in after-years, his own, of which he made himself so essential a part; and, beyond it, to that wider circle of friends among whom his familiar presence found perpetual welcome. One very close to him has lately said, "No words can tell how he loved us;" and to them who sat in their home beneath the shadow of his death, waiting, and not striving to find words to measure their own loss, came testimony from very many hearts in the wide world beyond that they, too, could not put into language their love and their regret. It seemed beautiful then, and now not otherwise, that the kindly smile, the cheerful word, and the helpful act shall linger unfor-

gotten in so many memories, when at last the lips are sealed and the hand is stilled forever.

Of the few yet living who are in any way familiar with his early life, one has lately written :

“The stone farm-house is still standing in Delaware County, where many of his summer holidays were passed ; and we have often been told of the boyish enthusiasm and success in all exercises and sports engaged in, the constant family supply of fish and game of his procuring. The love of nature, and familiarity with name, haunts, and habits of bird and beast was a strong peculiarity, and no labor was irksome that gave him a day’s companionship.

“When the season of recall to home and studies came, his father’s stables were converted into a nursery for the rearing of animal pets. Fondly the aged parents indulged the bright and loving boy in his active tastes. Whilst they lived, ‘Gustavus’ and his interests were to them the embodiment of joy. He gave to them his heart’s affectionate obedience, and in manhood his arm and cheering words comforted their departure.

“Very early music became to him a passion. Connecting himself with one of the largest musical societies of the day, his chosen instrument, the flute, was prominent at every concert ; and at home, in quartette and septette parties (all professionals but himself), he carried for hours his part in favorite operas. These rehearsals, delighting the family and always an outside throng, would be continued for four or five hours with scarcely a breathing spell, during which he seemed like one in an upper heaven of bliss. The re-

linquishment of all attendance upon operatic performances from a conviction of duty after professing the religion of Christ was a marked event, he saying again and again, 'The opera-house is no place for a Christian.' May we not believe that this entire yielding of his life, then and thenceforward, to his conscientious convictions of duty secured the happiness, the full satisfaction he derived from his religion?"

His earlier life may be said to have ended with his marriage on the 12th March, 1829, to Elizabeth E. Shallcross, of Philadelphia. Their married life was broken by her death, at the age of twenty-seven, on the 30th September, 1834. Of their children, but one, a daughter, is still living. A son, George Earp Benson, had reached the age of thirty-three years at his death on 11th October, 1866, and was laid beside his mother in the family vault at Ronaldson's Cemetery.

After eight years had elapsed, he was again married on the 11th February, 1841, to Margaretta F. Dale, daughter of Dr. Richard C. Dale, of Wilmington, Del., whom, with five of their children, he has left to follow him.

It is not very often that the husband and father is spared to his family for so long, and surely none have been more constant than he to all that made for their welfare and happiness. He was devoted to their interests in spite of heavy business cares, and the labors that occupied him. Through a long life he made his family the centre of his world, lavishing upon them the best that he was and the best that he found. All that was beautiful in art and happy in

contrivance were to him so many opportunities of giving pleasure and comfort to those he loved.

He counted best the hours that were spent at home. His presence there was as a light, for cheerfulness stayed with him and radiated from his sunny heart. With a mind broadly informed and always active, he could delight in the prattle of children, and he never grew old enough to refuse to join in their romps. When his children had gone out into households of their own, he promoted in every way happy intercourse between the new homes and the old. He liked the old house still to be thought of as home, and one inquiry, loving and eager, was sure to come from him at every opportunity for regathering,—“Are the children coming?” It was a pleasure to his heart until the end that the children loved to come.

The cheerfulness of temperament and perpetual youthfulness that have been alluded to are doubtless to be referred in some measure to his remarkable bodily health. His body was always ready for all demands. Who ever knew him to abstain from any proposed thing on the ground of being tired? He seldom cared to lie down during the day, nor chose an easy chair, but would seem as comfortable in one position as another. On a hot summer afternoon, while others were lounging or sleeping, he would be now sitting, now hunting for a bird's nest, now watching insect life, but always alert. No one enjoyed good living more, and none could make a more contented meal under adverse circumstances. He specifically enjoyed every meal, and yet has often been heard to say that he was never very hungry.

His sight was keen and so well preserved that when nearly seventy-seven years of age he could read the smallest print by candle-light without glasses. He wrote always with the ease and firmness that betoken a sound nervous system: his handwriting was beautiful and clear in the hastiest entry in a memorandum-book; in a book of account or a carefully penned letter it became exquisite, and it was perfectly firm to the last.

Yet in all probability this state of health was hardly more a natural gift than an acquired condition, to be largely attributed to his systematic method of living and the daily exercise and recreation that were never omitted except at the call of a sterner duty. Through all his life he was an accomplished horseman, and rarely failed during his business life, after the day's task was done, to spend several hours on the road. In later years he substituted for this an equal time of pleasant talk and exercise over the billiard-table.

In early life he had been a hard student at school and college, and afterwards a close reader, until business and family cares fulfilled their customary office in turning his attention to more practical matters. He always carried the effects of this early study visibly in his mind, nor did he ever lose his love of literature. His opinions upon all matters concerning the conduct of life and affairs were very decided and clear, nor did he lack confidence to put them into action. His success in business, in corporation work, and in the management of trusts is sufficient evidence of his disciplined talents. His nature was eminently practical, and turned instinctively from theory and from poetry. His faculties were admirably dis-

ciplined, and his judgment was good over a very wide circle. He always met a new position or complication intelligently, doing his work of every sort with a systematized and tireless method. While he had regular hours for everything he did, even for his "irregularities," as he said, and a particular way of doing everything, he never drifted into the conservatism of age. He was the one to suggest to the family a new summer resort, to introduce a new invention, and to plan and carry out alterations and improvements in his own home and his children's, and the church that he loved nearly as well. He disliked to have anything about him that was wearing out, and would not own old horses, carriages, carpets, or pianos. By temperament, in little things and great, he was always in the van.

To a disposition so practical and executive was added a warm appreciation and a critical faculty in art. His continued impulse to collect works of art and to form a gallery of them was only restrained by his benefactions—which were as conscientious as liberal—consuming so unusual a proportion of his income. He loved, too, ornament and bric-a-brac, and sought every occasion to introduce them into his own house and into the houses of others.

A nature so warm-hearted and genial naturally loved children, life, society, and merriment. He seldom cared to be alone, and his unceasing flow of good spirits and manifest enjoyment of society earned him a general welcome. His company was largely sought by the young in their merry-making and by men of affairs in their gatherings, and his own home was hospitable to a very large circle, his

heartly greeting always ready, the cordial grasp of his hand assured.

Here, then, was a man, by taste, temperament, and acquirement, pre-eminently fitted for life and the enjoyment of it. He had so many resources, so wide a judgment, so large a practical skill in things great and small, so much confidence in himself, so deep an interest in others. It is not inaccurate to say that he enjoyed life thoroughly, and that he found a pleasure in very many of the details of living that are to others a weariness. The feeling cannot be resisted that it was well for him that he was not called upon to undergo a conscious wearing out and failure of his powers. His strength never failed him, his capacities were never diminished, and the last day he spent out of bed was busily occupied with charitable work, and closed with his attendance at a religious service.

It appears elsewhere in these pages that this manly life bore many burdens for Christ's sake: as one who was intimate with him for a generation has said, "He spent and was spent in his Master's service." These works of righteousness were the natural expression of a spiritual life that was peculiarly healthy, appearing at its best in the home. The light in his heart was a light that lighted all the house. No one could hear his daily prayer at family worship, or even the few words of grace at the meal, without realizing that his was a spirit animated and sustained by an unwavering trust. He gave much more thought to things spiritual than busy men are wont to do, and the last half hour of every day was spent over his Bible. From a record in his handwriting on

the fly-leaf of that book, it appears that since 1858 and up to 10th June, 1881, he had completed fourteen systematic readings of the entire Scriptures from cover to cover. The fifteenth reading was broken off; he did not stay to read the things that are written in the Book of the Revelations of St. John, for he beheld them face to face.

On the morning of Friday, the 16th March, 1883, he awoke with an increase of the pains through the chest that had been troubling him for several days, and that would have incapacitated any one else. He dressed himself as usual, but decided to call in a physician, who reported that his lung was slightly congested, and recommended him to return to his bed. There he lay until the early morning of the 22d, when, very unexpectedly to all about him, he was called away; spared, happily, both the anticipation and the consciousness of death. Even so he would have chosen that his end might be.

To those whose remembrance covers only his mature years, it is impossible to think of his life as separated from the love of her whom he loved with a surpassing affection, whom he trusted with unfaltering trust, whom he shielded as one cherishes his ideal. She knows, better than all beside, how precious and yet how inexpressible are the memories of his life in the household; their children understand more fully the changeless love of God, since to Him they can pray as "Our Father which art in Heaven."

These pages are gathered together from the wish that some distinct memory of so long and so loyal a life may

remain to those of the family of Gustavus S. Benson who were yet too young at his death to realize his remarkable excellence.

The words that his children shall speak to their own and their children's children are here supplemented by the testimony of other friends with whom his life was lived, that so may be made manifest the riches and the responsibility of those who bear his name. Three generations of his descendants sat with him only the other day at his table, and the heart that lies so still was warm with love for them all. The name he bore so long and stainlessly needs no better memorial than that they who bear it now may hand it down with the added lustre of their own lives. The words spoken of him in one of the resolutions printed here reveal the fullness of their heritage: he was "a man, upright, wise, gentle, charitable, and true."

MY FATHER'S HOUSE

LIKE songs resung, yet seeming not the same,
I hear soft notes of laughter; and a voice,
Clearer than other voices, calls my name
From out the silence of my father's house.

Like cloudy highlands lifted from the night,
Yet golden in the lingering afterglow,
Arise remembered seasons, and a light
That lifts the shadows in my father's house.

Intangible, yet beautiful, they seem,
Like glimpses of things longed for from afar;
And I, as one that waketh from a dream
That framed the fabric of my father's house.

When still I join with other hands mine own,
They thrill and falter with unspoken thought,
So strangely smaller has the circle grown,
So strangely empty is my father's house.

Oh, vacant chamber and untrodden hall,
And things familiar that have lost their use!
Oh, days of meeting and of festival
That were so happy in my father's house!

I may not linger, and I turn away;
Hush, now, ye solemn voices of the night!
Lo! glimmers from the east another day
Against the portals of "my Father's house."

MEMORIAL DISCOURSE

BY THE

REV. WILLIAM P. BREED, D.D.

DELIVERED AT THE

WEST SPRUCE STREET CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA, ON THE 20TH MAY, 1883

"Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season."—JOB v. 26.

"Man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?"—JOB xiv. 10.

"Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me."—JOHN xvii. 24.

THE first of these texts points us to the grave; the second asks the momentous question, What awaits man beyond the grave? and the third replies that some of them at least are pavilioned forever with the Son of God.

The first takes us out into the harvest-field, and shows us the golden shock of corn. The ground has been ploughed, the seed has been planted, sunshine and shower have lavished their benedictions; and under these benedictions the rootlets have crept downward, and the blade has crept upward, and the ear has looked out from its hiding-place, and then at last the full corn in the ear. The frosts have not bitten, the hail has not smitten, the tornado has not laid low, armed hosts have not trampled down the grain. May and June, July and August have fanned the field with their

wings, and now autumn puts in the sickle, and the golden sheaf is garnered. The ear attuned to delicate discrimination will detect the tones of a sweet though chastened music in this stanza that sings of the human harvest-home. It tells of the ripe corn coming in "in his season;" gathered in in its golden prime; in the case before us, seventy-seven years after its first appearance to the human eye. How delightful are the associations that cluster about the growing, ripening, ripened, and garnered grain; associations with apple-blossoms, red clover, white buckwheat, and new-mown hay; bees gathering their sweet stores, and butterflies, like fluttering gems, hovering over; associations with well-packed granaries, setting all the wheels of industry and commerce a-humming. And in our thoughts, at least, all these associations are clustered by the text around the coffin of the good old man. All his life he has been a blessing. All the fields of society around him have felt his salutary influence. The Almighty was with him; his children were about him; he went out to the gate of the city; young men saw him and stood up; when the ear heard him it blessed him; when the eye saw him it gave witness to him, because he delivered the poor when he cried, and the fatherless and him that had none to help him; the blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon him, and he caused the widow's heart to sing for joy; and thus our departed friend came to his grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season.

And we stand again by his grave; it is on the hill-side, where the hill slopes steeply down to the waters. Other hills rise around, and now the landscape lies before us in

variegated beauty. The sheen of the waters is mingled with the infant green of the foliage and the richer green of the grass; with the snow-white bloom of the apple-tree and the dog-wood; fragrant, too, with the trailing arbutus and the violet. And here, by this honored grave, every blade of grass, every opening flower joins us in the yearning inquiry, Where is he? The mortal garment he wore lies folded here in this wardrobe of God, under watch and ward of the guardian angels; but where is he who wore that garment?

This question is old as human death. Where is he? the hero, the statesman, the bustling man of business, the orator, the poet, the kind father, the fond mother, the dutiful child; they are gone from our view, and where are they?

“We turn the pages that they read,
Their written words we linger o’er;
But in the sun they cast no shade,
No voice is heard, no sound is made,
No step is on the conscious floor.”

Where are they? How often does bereaved affection or weeping sympathy send out the sigh—

“I passed the burial-place, and wept sorely
To think how many of my friends were in the mansions of the dead;
And, in an agony of grief, I cried out, Where are they?
And echo made reply and answered, Where are they?”

Where are those beloved members of this church with whom we have been called to part since the new year

dawned upon us? David Burpee, M.D., the beloved physician, endeared to so many households by the conscientious fidelity of his attentions and the triumphs of his skill, the fond father and the faithful husband; Charles S. Boyd, whom no one knew but to love, cut off as in the twinkling of an eye, but all ready for even a sudden death; young Edward Cheeseman, so strangely gifted, and worn down with sickness so painful and protracted; and young George Junkin, plucked like an opening bud from the stem; and Gustavus S. Benson.

To whom shall we appeal for a reply? Not to the living, for they have never died; not to the dead, for

“They have no share in all that’s done
Beneath the circuit of the sun.”

There are, indeed, certain familiar facts full of meaning as to the continuance of the soul in the full possession of its faculties even in the midst of bodily decay. The body is ever changing. It is never the same for any two consecutive instants. Every exhalation of breath divorces from it what a moment ago were elements in its vital being, and every inhalation allies with it materials that a moment before were members of the great family of the inorganic and the insentient. In less than seven years, perhaps in less than five, the body becomes entirely new; and in the seventy-seven years of our friend’s life with us his body was wholly renewed eleven, perhaps fifteen, perhaps twenty times, and yet he knew as well as he knew anything that he was still the

very same being who in boyhood flew the kite, tossed the ball, went to school, and won the college prize. That hand with which twenty years ago you wiped the widow's tears, gave your purse to the poverty-stricken family, helped up from depression your downcast neighbor, has utterly passed away. In it to-day there is not an atom of matter that dwelt there twenty years ago. And yet God knows and you know that it was you yourself that did those Christly deeds!

The whole Bible is built upon the truth that when man dies he just begins to live. This blessed book assures us, in sentences that fall on the ear like the tones of vesper bells from Alpine heights, that when "the silver cord is loosed and the golden bowl is broken," the dust returns to the earth as it was, but the spirit returns to God who gave it. With Jesus on the mount stood Elijah, who eight hundred years before, and Moses, who fifteen hundred years before had passed from time to eternity. Jesus said, "When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, all nations shall be gathered before him."

This, then, is a partial answer to our question, Where is he? He is alive and among the living; alive, with unclouded clearness of apprehension, undimmed keenness of perception, unabated vigor of reasoning, of recollection, of anticipation.

But just *where* is he? He *was* with us in the flesh, in our homes, in our church and prayer-meeting. He was a babe, a youth, a man.

It was in Baltimore that his cradle was rocked. It was

on the 23d day of September, 1806, that he was born. Of five children he was the third, his brother Alexander, with whom he was so long associated in business, being the eldest.

His parents were Richard Benson and Catherine Smith Benson. Richard Benson was descended from one of the name who crossed the seas to the new world in company with Lord Baltimore, and found a home on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, at a place named, and still called, "Benson's Choice." Richard Benson was born in Talbot County, Md., whence he removed to Baltimore, and thence, in 1812, to Philadelphia, when his son Gustavus was six years of age. He went into business at what is now 712 Market Street, a property still in possession of the family. While old age was still well in the future he retired from business with a handsome competency, and moved to No. 5 Virginia Row, in Walnut Street, above Thirteenth Street.

Richard Benson and his wife were members of the Academy Methodist Church in Fourth Street. In this church Mr. Benson was prominent for his zeal and activity. Afterwards he became President of the Board of Trustees of the Western Methodist Church, which built the edifice subsequently occupied by the St. Stephen's Church in Tenth Street.

These few simple facts give us a glimpse of the surroundings of our friend during the plastic period of his early youth, when almost every breath makes greater or less impression upon the character. If the climate in which one lives, and the atmosphere which one breathes tell upon the physical constitution and temperament, much more surely

do the domestic influences in which the child lives and moves and has his being tell upon the moral and spiritual life. And this human plant of which we now speak, during the years of its early unfolding, felt the dews of godliness on opening bud and spreading leaf, and was bathed day by day and hour by hour in the sunshine of an ardent, intelligent piety. That boy passed the years of early childhood with the spectacle of a godly father and pious mother ever before his eye, with the prayers of a pious mother and a godly father ever in his ears. On bended knee at the family altar, in the house of God on the Sabbath day, the moulding power of the gospel was ever at work upon his soul, and the foundations were thus laid for the profoundly religious character that formed so marked a feature of his later life.

Oh, the blessedness of a godly home! There is not an element in the human character that is not bettered by the influences of such a home. Genuine piety imparts strength to the intellect, while it powerfully conserves its energies by withholding from those excesses and vices that sap the foundations of the soul, and thus leaves the way clear for a full, healthful development of all the higher, hidden possibilities of the being.

And in those surroundings lay also the seeds of that business skill and energy that in later years ripened into affluent success.

The world into which Gustavus S. Benson was born seventy-seven years ago was, in many respects, quite a different world from that he parted with at his death. When

he began to thread his unaccustomed way through the streets of Philadelphia, James Madison was President of the Republic, and during the life of our friend he witnessed, and to a greater or less degree participated in, the excitements attending the election or succession of seventeen presidents; the impeachment of one; the assassination of two; the long fury of the anti-slavery excitement; the agonizing, protracted paroxysm of the civil war, and the joyous delirium of its termination.

When about seven years old he would hear his father tell, with sparkling eye and exulting tone, that Commodore Hull, in the American man-of-war "Constitution," had in a brilliant engagement of thirty minutes reduced the British frigate "Guerriere" to a helpless wreck; and, soon after, that Decatur, in the "United States," had disposed of the British ship "Macedonian" in the same handsome fashion; and of other like victories that opened the eyes of Europe to the startling fact that a strong, healthy, young lion was biding his time in these western jungles, and informed the people of Britain that the time had come for a modification of the proud old song, "Britannia rules the waves." While yet a boy he would doubtless, once in a while, stroll into the country as far west as Broad Street, and there gaze upon the old round tower that then formed the distributing reservoir of the city. At the age of seventeen he saw the Fairmount Water-Works completed. When he was twenty-five years old the Mint was transferred from Seventh Street, near Filbert, to its present site, and about the same time the first iron track was laid to connect Philadelphia by rail with the

outside world. He was thirty years old when the homes of this city began to be lighted with gas.

When the family came to Philadelphia they found it a heterogeneous group of municipalities, often discordant in policy, fostering confusion, disorder, and riot; and it was not till he was forty years old that the consolidation took place and the petty governments were combined in one. When he came to dwell in this city he found here less than one hundred thousand people, and when he died nearly a million of hearts throbbed in its bosom. Then seventeen thousand homes sufficed to house its people; now one hundred and fifty thousand houses are too few. Then some threescore churches invited the people to public worship, and now the number of churches is not far from six hundred.

At the early age of seventeen young Benson was graduated at the University of Pennsylvania. The Commencement Exercises were held in Masonic Hall, and the printed order of exercises was as follows; Prayer by the Provost; Latin Salutatory by George M. Wharton; English Salutatory by Gustavus S. Benson; Belles-Lettres Oration by James R. Eckard; an Oration by Augustus H. Lochman, and another by W. S. Zantzinger; one by Persifor F. Smith, James A. Donath, and Charles Mifflin; and the Valedictory Oration by Thomas L. Janeway. Mr. Benson's salutatory oration is recorded in a small blank book, in a style of penmanship that vies in beauty with the finest engraving.

Mr. Benson was at college a diligent and hard-working student. Of Latin he was very fond, and in after-years he was ever ready to assist his sons in the translation of the

more difficult passages in the Latin authors. His reading was very extensive, covering a wide field of literature, and he was specially fond of the great English classics, the works of Walter Scott being his favorites.

His first aim was the legal profession, and having pursued a course of study in the law office of John M. Scott, Esq., once Mayor of the city, in 1827 he was admitted to the bar. That with his vigorous talent, his resoluteness of purpose, and his power of application he would have made his mark in that profession, there is no room to question. His leading intellectual characteristic was rather mathematical than rhetorical, and his style of thought led him along the line of severe logical reasoning rather than that of imagination and fancy. He never became a fluent public speaker; but those who heard him, as so many of us so often heard him, in the lecture-room, where his words were always weighty with sound sense, as they were also redolent of the spirit of piety, will never question that the usual training at the bar would have equipped him with a power before court or jury unattainable by mere brilliancy of thought and diction.

But, in the providence of God, his path led in another direction. At the age of twenty-two he entered the banking-house of his brother Alexander, and soon became a member of the firm of Alexander Benson & Co., in which relation he continued for a period of thirty-five years. Success soon set an impressive seal upon that firm, and it became widely known in the financial world, and known only to be respected and trusted. Mr. Benson soon mastered the details

and ramifications of a business then exceedingly perplexing; a business in which there was frequent call for prompt, instantaneous decisions, involving not only the vital interests of the firm but those also of the patrons. It was a business in which only the keenest insight, the largest sagacity, and the readiest decision could keep from hourly peril. Every State had its own banking system, and the bankers or merchants of no State would accept the currency of another but at a greater or less discount. Worthless bank-notes were thick almost as dead leaves on the autumn winds. Counterfeits abounded. To do even a safe, not to say a lucrative, business demanded a keen eye and a clear head; and clearer head and keener eye than those of Mr. Benson it was not easy to find. In one instance, at least, his eye detected a counterfeit which had been passed upon as genuine by the very engraver of the plate that was counterfeited. In his position Mr. Benson became well and widely known as an acknowledged authority in finance; and with such skill, judgment, and ability were the affairs of that house conducted, that through a period of thirty-five years, during which financial cyclones swept banks, banking-houses, business firms of every class, and manufacturing companies to ruin, that house remained unshaken, and, with occasional slight arrests, was steadily and richly prosperous.

It may seem, at first blush, a strange thing to say, and yet we say it with small misgiving, that one of the wisest and most characteristic of Mr. Benson's business acts was his retirement from business. The year 1862 found him in the midst of a prosperity, affluent beyond precedent. But

this very success added to the constant pressure upon thought and brain. At one time and another he became conscious of sensations that foretokened no good to his physical condition. From these sensations he sought relief by more frequent exercise in the open air and occasional brief relaxations of official labor. But they still recurred, and at length he began to ask himself the question, "Of what use is wealth to a broken-down man?" And in the year 1863, in the very midst of glittering prosperity, his income larger than at any former period, and with every prospect of steady increase, he resolved to retire. You will hardly disagree with me in the judgment that, under the circumstances, to form and carry into effect such a resolution required a rare degree of wisdom and an uncommon decision of character. It must be very difficult to refuse to let down the net once more, and then once again, and still once more, when every dip of the net is sure to land a golden supply of the precious prey. If more of our hard-worked business men were able to see when they had enough, when body and mind required relief from ceaseless pressure, perhaps there would be more around us in the enjoyment of a happy and serene old age.

That Mr. Benson's retirement from business arose from nothing like a desire for personal ease, that he was very far from saying to himself, "Thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry," is obvious from the fact that from that time his almost every hour was spent in work for others,—secular, benevolent, or religious. He was President of the Board of Trustees of

the West Spruce Street Presbyterian Church; Member of the Board of Publication; Director of the Pennsylvania Bible Society; Manager of the Howard Hospital; and Member of the Board of City Trusts. Thus at the age of seventy-seven he was doing the work of a man of fifty.

That Board of City Trusts has charge of funds to the amount of not far from ten million dollars. Of this Board one of our city journals wisely writes:

“The death of Mr. Gustavus S. Benson creates a vacancy in the Board of City Trusts which the judges should be very careful about filling. Something far higher than mere ordinary official integrity is necessary for the direction of this great trust. The mere routine work of the Board and its committees is comparatively nothing. Back of this, and far above it, is the personal relation in which the trustees stand to the beneficiaries of the College, and this involves duties for which many very good men have neither taste nor ability.”

What were Mr. Benson's qualifications for membership in such a Board, let those with whom he there labored for thirteen years testify. At a special meeting of the Board just following Mr. Benson's death, the Mayor of the city and the President and Vice-President of the Board were appointed a committee to prepare a suitable minute respecting him. In their report they say:

“For thirteen years he had been associated with the Board, having been one of the original appointments of the Board of Judges, and was also called upon to act as chairman at the first meeting for the organization of the Board.

He then accepted the position of Chairman of the Committee on Admission, Discipline, and Discharge of the Girard College, and in that capacity visited, with but few exceptions, all accessible homes of the twenty-five hundred children, applicants for admission, whose names have been recorded during the thirteen years of his service,—a duty performed with a zeal which the pleasure of leading suffering children to a higher, happier sphere could alone inspire.

“He has for thirteen years been a member of the Committee of the Girard Estate within the city of Philadelphia; since 1877 a member of the Committee of Finance; always a member of the Executive Committee; and had but lately energetically entered upon new duties in the Committee on Wills Hospital and Minor Trusts.

“Mr. Benson’s performance of duty was of no ordinary character. When we look back upon his work and relations with the Board, a sense of his uniform kindness and courtesy; a desire to avoid giving pain even when misconstrued in some effort to make perfectly clear the integrity of our action; a sense of his constant self-devotion and untiring industry, working in quiet and without self-assertion, yet in due time felt and appreciated, all united, impress our minds and call for acknowledgment of his merit and our loss.”

Never was eulogy better merited!

Most men live in two several worlds,—the world that lies open to the public eye, and the world shut in under the roof and by the walls of home. A gifted citizen of our Republic, wandering in a foreign land homeless and

friendless, sat down one lonely hour, pen in hand, and wrote :

“Mid pleasures and palaces though we may roam,
Be it ever so humble, there’s no place like home.”

That song rung in the ears of English-speaking men like the sound of a great silver bell! Wherever heard, it called echoes from the very depths of the heart. The lonely and forlorn have sobbed it in their tears, and the happy have sung it amid showers of golden smiles. Happy is the family, and right worthy of regard is the man whose home brightens at his coming! And this was emphatically true of Mr. Benson and his home. That circle was never happier than when the husband and father was present as its centre. Than he, no man more richly enjoyed the pleasures of domestic and social life.

But, when speaking of a king, it were strange to omit mention of his crown! And the crown of this king was his piety. Whatever else Mr. Benson was, he was pre-eminently a religious man. Whatever excellency gave lustre to his character, that which gave lustre to that lustre was religion.

Jesus Christ was the one model man in whom understanding, will, and heart, the elemental trinity of true manhood, bloomed and blended in absolute perfection. And it is in vital union with Jesus Christ that whatever of God’s image in man has survived the fall ripens to highest maturity.

It is vain to question what Mr. Benson would or might have been without the influences of the gospel, for he never

was without the influences of the gospel, and in this land he could not be. Science assures us that the ruddy glow of the burning coal in the grate is simply the outgushing of long-imprisoned sunbeams. How vain to ask what that coal would have been, if, during the ages so long ago, the sun had not shone on the forests out of which it was made! And so with characters formed in a Christian community. That spiteful abuser of the gospel cannot point to any excellence in his own character as a proof that man may be good without the gospel, for that very man was born into the noonday of the gospel. Gospel light has shone upon him, and gospel heat has warmed him ever since he began to breathe. Analyze his character, and just as the old sunlight is found in the glowing coal, the gospel is found in every trait of excellence. His high notions of virtue, of honesty, of integrity, are gospel sunrays inwoven in his very being.

So of our departed friend. Ask not what he would have been without the influences of the gospel upon his soul, for he was born into a godly household, he was baptized with the tears of a godly mother, and drank in the breath of a praying father.

But there came a time when a voice from heaven called him to consider the duty of a personal, intelligent acceptance of gospel truth. It is one thing to be borne along by the tide of Christian influence, and another thing to voluntarily launch the bark upon the tide, and row in co-operation with the current. The time came when a tender voice was heard in his soul, calling, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. Behold, I stand at the door and knock.

If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in and sup with him, and he with me. Is it nothing to thee, O thou that passest by? Behold, and see if there is any sorrow like unto my sorrow!"^a Down from that upper chamber in Jerusalem, mingling with the moans that floated through the olive boughs in awe-struck, quivering Gethsemane, and with the groans from Calvary; down along a succession of millions of communion tables came the soft behest, "This do in remembrance of me;" and he heard and heeded. Twenty-four years ago last December he came before the session of this church, and with the frankness that ever characterized his life he said, "I have no extraordinary experience to relate. I can tell of no religious fervors, of no remarkable change of feeling or experience, of no joyful exhilaration or even calm delight. For long I have allowed to myself nothing but what becomes a Christian man, and so it is my purpose to live. The command of Christ to confess him before man is plain and explicit; that command I wish to obey."

The following Sabbath morning he took his seat with his wife and two children, and I believe that from that time for twenty-four years he was never absent from his seat on communion day, excepting only that Sabbath when he lay upon his dying bed.

And from that time, also, his growth in grace was steady and, especially to those whose wont it is to participate with us in the services of the week in our lecture-room, very obvious. In his earlier prayers and exhortations a certain tremulousness of voice told how his will was struggling with his emotions; but, as years passed, a growing mastery of his

thoughts was observable, and also an ever-ripening Christian experience. His reports at our missionary meetings were full of information, and very instructive. And in the prayer-meeting his words, especially in those precious meetings on the evening of the communion Sabbath, were rich with the life of godliness. The last service he attended was one in the lecture-room, and his prayer on that occasion none will forget who heard it. As he drew near the close his spirit warmed, and with a tone of grateful exultation he exclaimed, "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus!"

Mr. Benson's physical constitution was well-nigh perfect. His health was vigorous, and for the last twenty-five years almost uninterrupted. He hardly knew what it was to be weary. His eyesight was such that to the age of seventy-seven he read the finest print with ease and without artificial aid; and to the last his handwriting was firm and beautiful.

In summing up our thoughts of our departed friend, we may say that if there is one word in which his whole character may be expressed, it is the word *fidelity*,—constant, unswerving, all-pervading fidelity. He belonged to that class of men who could not get his own consent to accept the honors of an office, the duties of which he could not faithfully discharge. He was a member of many boards and committees, and it is risking little to say that he attended every meeting of every one of them when circumstances rendered that attendance possible.

As a church-member he was a model of fidelity. In our branch of the church there are some six hundred thousand

members, and were they all as faithful as Mr. Benson, how magnificently would her work be done. The machinery of the church would work like that engine in the Mint,—smoothly, noiselessly, but mightily. During the twenty-four years of his membership in this church he was never absent from a meeting, Sabbath morning, afternoon, or evening, on Wednesday or Friday evenings, except in those rarest of cases when sickness detained him, and I do not remember three times in the twenty-four years; or when he was absent from the city, or in those very rare instances when some other duty called him elsewhere; and he was as punctual as sunrise. Repeatedly has it occurred that when the time for beginning a service in the lecture-room seemed to have arrived, and I saw that Mr. Benson was not in his seat, I have said to myself, “My watch is too fast.” I could sooner distrust a good watch than I could his punctuality.

Mr. Benson’s religion was a part of his being, and hence, wherever he went it also went. We hear complaints—I trust that they are exaggerated, perhaps they are even fabricated—of strange doings and neglects on the part of church-members during the summer absence at the seaside or among the mountains, and, above all, during sojourn in a foreign land, where only the eye of a crucified Saviour looks on. It is said—let us hope that it is one of the many slanders the world delights to perpetrate against professors of religion—that many a one puts off the mantle of Christian fidelity, and drinks in all worldliness with greediness! If any do this, they do what was utterly impossible to Mr. Benson!

Wherever the Sabbath found him, it found him in the house of God; or if there were no house of God, he was ever ready to secure some form of service under the trees or in the parlor of the hotel. The truth is that religious duties and exercises imparted a special flavor to whatever other enjoyments providence laid in his way. Years ago, after spending weeks in the same house with a young woman, I asked a friend, "Is she a professor of religion?" She afterwards told me that that question, repeated to her, implying as it did that her church-membership could only be ascertained by a reference to the church records, went to her heart like a keen-pointed arrow. We are abundantly safe in saying that no one could be with Mr. Benson weeks or days without ascertaining that he was a follower of the Son of God. And if to-day you visit the places where for many past years Mr. Benson, in the course of his summer journeyings, spent a Sabbath, you will be sure to find in many of them plants growing from the seeds that fell from his heart and hands. He was a Presbyterian, but his Christian sympathies were far too large to be shut up within his own denominational limits. At Long Branch, for example, near the sea stands a handsome church edifice belonging to the Dutch Reformed body. Mr. Benson assisted at the laying of the corner-stone of that edifice, and in its walls are bricks, stones, and timbers, the gift of his hand. At Swift Water, a place of summer resort on the Pokono Mountain, stands an humble Methodist church, and in that church you will find the hymn-books labelled, "A gift from Gustavus S. Benson, Esq." The labelling was done without his knowledge, but

the people very properly felt that the gift of the stranger worshipping with them for a Sabbath or two merited this simple acknowledgment.

Before me, as I write, lies a letter from a gentleman in the city of New York, addressed, "To the Wife and Children or the Legal Representatives of Gustavus S. Benson," and saying :

"The morning paper tells me of the decease of Mr. Benson, and recalls a possibly forgotten incident of his life, where a word and a contribution in season helped to lay the foundation-stone, and to give encouragement in an hour of discouragement to an undertaking out of which large results have already come, and even greater are promised."

It seems that at Greenwood Lake, Orange Co., N. Y., an attempt was made to arrange for regular Sabbath worship. At the close of a service in the hotel parlor, at which Mr. Benson led the singing, he introduced himself to the leader of the meeting and offered a contribution towards the erection of a church edifice. In the subsequent fall, a meeting of ministers was held at that place to further the work, and a check from Mr. Benson was received, covering a large proportion of the expenses of the assemblage. The result is a handsome chapel on an island near the head of the lake, and, connected with the church, also an Institute of Christian Philosophy. And this gentleman expresses the conviction that but for the encouragement given by Mr. Benson, the enterprise would probably have failed. As it is, he regards that chapel and that institute as a monument to the memory of our departed friend.

These are but specimens of many kindred services he spontaneously and cordially rendered to the cause of religion, as he passed to and fro in the land.

In the fall of the year 1870 Mr. Benson was elected and ordained a ruling elder in the Presbyterian Church. The roll of the ruling eldership in our branch of the church sparkles with many bright names, names that tell of an amount of talent, character, piety, and salutary force for which any denomination of Christians might well be thankful. In that list such names as these have place: William A. Wheeler, ex-Vice-President of the Republic, Judge Stanley Matthews, Judge William Strong, Chief Justice Sharswood, Horace Maynard, William E. Dodge, and Gustavus S. Benson. In this office, as in all others he occupied, his course was characterized by a noble fidelity.

His love for the West Spruce Street Church was exceeded by that of no one who ever belonged to it. He could not rest unless he was doing something to add to the comeliness of the house or the comfort of the worshippers. One cannot lift the eye in this house of worship without seeing the marks of his zeal, taste, and liberality.

Besides the honored name of Singleton A. Mercer, without whose co-operation it is probable that this edifice would not have been built, there are two kindred names written side by side upon it from foundation to top-stone,—the names of Morris Patterson and Gustavus S. Benson. For many long years they lived side by side in brotherly intimacy and affection, and their hearts, like kindred drops, mingled into one in this church enterprise. And a very striking similarity

characterized their departure. In the case of each a deadly cold chilled the frame and preyed upon the life, neuralgic and rheumatic pains shot through the back and chest, and, in the case of each, in the early morning the silver cord was suddenly loosed, and the immortal spirit set at liberty.

One of the services which Mr. Benson rendered with rich enjoyment to himself and to others, also, was that of visiting, in company with the pastor, the people in their homes. During the fall, winter, and spring, when the weather allowed, he would drive to my door in his carriage, and we would visit sometimes six families of an evening. We visited both the rich and the poor, and while Mr. Benson enjoyed them all, he enjoyed none more than those we made to people in humble life. On those occasions he put himself upon the most familiar terms with the people, calling the children to him and taking them on his knee, and showed by every word and act a warm and honest regard for all their interests.

His liberality was princely; his purse was seldom shut for any length of time. In 1863 he retired from business, and in the twenty subsequent years of his life he gave away more than his whole fortune at the time of his retirement.

And what a story that scene in his sick room tells! It was Saturday, March the 17th. The next day the Lord's Supper was to be celebrated in our church. After a brief absence from the room, his wife returned to find the bed vacant. Looking for her husband, she found him bending over the desk in an adjoining room writing, and, for the first time in his life, with a trembling hand. And what was he writing? A check to be put into the contribution-box at the

communion table, a contribution for the poor of the church. At that communion scene his seat was vacant, but his purse was there. Had we known it at the time, we should have heard, as that check went into the box, in almost audible utterance, the words, "Inasmuch as thou hast done it unto the least of these, my brethren, thou hast done it unto me." Five days after this, that hand was still in death. It was early on the morning of March 22d that he passed away.

Over him seventy-seven years had passed, evil influences that blast so many lives assailing him only to be instantly repelled; temptations, thick as motes in the dusty air, brushed away with instinctive scorn; the life-work diligently, tirelessly pursued from day to day, from week to week, from month to month for more than seventy years; reproach and rebuke forestalled by a crystalline fidelity; the life adorned with a golden liberality, and crowned with a Christ-like piety. Such a course argues the character, the will, the firmness of a resolute manliness, and the exhibition of a kingly self-sovereignty more than royal!

What a model for the young man! They say that a great city is a place of fearful peril for the young man. But what rural district, what secluded village does not abound with perils? That the youth may grow to maturity in a great city as pure as the sisters that glorify their homes is proved by many an instance in this congregation, and is shown in the life of Gustavus S. Benson; for he was, among other things, pre-eminently a pure man. From his lips no unseemly words found way.

Thus he came to his grave in a full age, like as a shock
of corn cometh in in his season.

“And call it not death when the reaper’s hand
Is laid on the ripened corn;
And the grain we’ve watched from the springing germ
From the parent stem is torn.

“Ah, no! for this is its perfect hour;
And ere wintry storms have come,
’Tis safe in the reaper’s bosom borne
With shoutings of harvest home.”

But where is he?

“Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me,
be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory,
which thou hast given me.”

There he is, beholding the glory that the Father gave to
the Son!

“In my Father’s house are many mansions. I go to
prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for
you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that
where I am there ye may be also.”

He is there in that matchless mansion prepared for him
by Him he loved so well.

“And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me,
Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from
henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from
their labors; and their works do follow them.”

He is there resting from his labors, and welcoming his works as they come after him.

“High in yonder realms of light,
Dwell the raptured saints above;
Far beyond our feeble sight,
Happy in Immanuel’s love.
Pilgrims in this vale of tears,
Once they knew, like us below,
Gloomy doubts, distressing fears,
Torturing pain, and heavy woe.

“Mid the chorus of the skies,
Mid the angelic lyres above,
Hark! their songs melodious rise,
Songs of praise to Jesus’ love.
Happy spirits, ye are fled
Where no grief can entrance find;
Lulled to rest the aching head,
Soothed the anguish of the mind.

“All is tranquil and serene,
Calm and undisturbed repose,
There no cloud can intervene,
There no angry tempest blows.
Every tear is wiped away,
Sighs no more shall heave the breast,
Night is lost in endless day,
Sorrow, in eternal rest.”

May we die the death of the righteous, and our last end be like his. Amen and amen!

THE FUNERAL SERVICES

THE funeral took place from his late residence, No. 1515 Spruce Street, on the afternoon of Friday, the 26th March, 1883, and at three o'clock services were held at the West Spruce Street Church.

The pall-bearers were :

Mr. Alexander Biddle, President of the Board of City Trusts ;

Mr. Charles H. Rogers, President of the Tradesmen's Bank ;

Mr. Strickland Kneass, of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company ;

Mr. Joseph Patterson, President of the Western Bank ;

Mr. Henry D. Sherrerd, President of the Insurance Company of the State of Pennsylvania, and an elder in the church ;

Mr. William P. Cresson, President of the Howard Hospital ;

Mr. Benjamin B. Comegys, President of the Philadelphia Bank, and a Director of the City Trusts ; and

Mr. Alfred G. Baker, ex-President of the Franklin Fire Insurance Company.

The pastor, Dr. Breed, said, that in accordance with the special desire of the family, the services on this occasion would be simple and brief; another opportunity would offer to dwell more fully upon the various characteristics and services of our beloved friend.

The Rev. Dr. Charles A. Dickey then read the Ninetieth Psalm, beginning,

“Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.

“Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.”

Dr. Breed then said that the Rev. Dr. Dickey represented on this occasion the Presbytery of Philadelphia; the Rev. Dr. Dana, the Presbyterian Board of Publication, of which Mr. Benson was for many years a very useful and faithful member; and the Rev. Dr. Knox, the Presbytery of Philadelphia North.

Dr. Dana gave out the hymn,

“Abide with me; fast falls the even-tide;
The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide.”

ADDRESS OF THE REV. DR. WILLIAM P. BREED

THE twenty thousand elders who bear rule in our branch of the Presbyterian Church in this land embrace an amount of talent, character, piety, and salutary force for which any denomination of Christians might well be thankful. On the long, bright catalogue of this eldership shine such names as that of William A. Wheeler, once Vice-President of the United States, Horace Maynard, William E. Dodge, Stanley Matthews, Judge Strong, Chief Justice Sharswood, Daniel L. Collier, Morris Patterson, and, last but not least, Gustavus S. Benson.

Of commanding talents, of excellent education, for a period of forty years he was the partner of his brother, Alexander Benson, in a banking-house in this city, known far and wide in the land, and known only to be trusted and respected. With such skill, judgment, and integrity were the affairs of this house conducted, that for a period of more than twoscore years it remained unshaken, even in the midst

of financial tempests that swept to destruction institutions like it on every side.

Engrossed, however, as he necessarily was with the duties of his secular vocation, he found time and heart to devote to various other interests, commercial and beneficent. As helper in both of these latter spheres he was almost greedily sought, for he was eminently a man of his word. He was eminently a faithful man. When he consented to undertake a service, he was sure to render it. In a board of directors, whoever was absent, he was not. On a committee, or sub-committee, whoever neglected his duties, he did not. The result was, that whenever an important committee connected with a board of which he was a member was found inefficient, he was, if it were possible, placed upon it, and then all knew that its work would be done. And as the faithful and willing worker is very freely allowed by his brethren to work, the burdens came very heavily upon him, and he was weighed down with important and responsible services; and those who knew his age, and knew the works to which he turned his hand, wondered not that he died, but that he lived so long. Verging on to the age of fourscore years, he still discharged the duties of a man of fifty.

The 15th day of December, twenty-four years ago, saw him sitting here at his first communion table, that table spread almost on the very spot where now rests the couch on which he sleeps so peacefully. It was my cherished privilege to give him the right hand of fellowship, to break the bread, and pour the wine on that December morning when he took those sacramental vows, and in that and in

subsequent kindred services and associations, in the Session, in the Presbytery, in the Synod, in the General Assembly, on various boards, in the prayer-meeting, in the house of God, and in the duties and pleasures of social life, our hearts and lives became blended into a union which I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, will ever, ever dissolve.

It was a day which this church may very well cherish in its memory when he took those vows. Since that time he has built himself into this edifice. Not with us at the outset, to take part in its erection, he, with his household, joined us while we were yet worshipping in the lecture-room. He was with us when this house was dedicated to the worship of Almighty God; and we cannot, this afternoon, lift our eyes without seeing the marks of his zeal, and energy, and generous liberality; see them in that organ, whose sweet tones roll over the worshipping assembly on the Sabbath, built under his eye, and modified by his musical taste; in these galleries, modified by his architectural taste; this pulpit; and these frescoed decorations that look down upon us from that beautiful ceiling. It is due to him, very largely, that we have been able to employ a city missionary, to go from door to door, and visit the sick and the dying, doing the most Christly and kindly works in a great city like this.

There are two kindred names written on this edifice from foundation to top-stone, and they are the names of Morris Patterson and Gustavus S. Benson. For long, long years they lived side by side as neighbors, in the closest and most

affectionate intimacy, and their hearts, like kindred drops, mingled into one in their interest in this church enterprise. And a wonderful parallelism characterized their departure. In both cases a cold shattered the frame. Neuralgia and rheumatic pain darted, like arrows, through the chest. In both cases we anticipated again to see them with us, but in vain; for, in both cases, early in the morning, in the twinkling of an eye, the cord was cut and the spirits were liberated, and now they are singing together the Song of Moses the Servant of God, and the Lamb.

As a church-member, Mr. Benson was a model of fidelity. For twenty-four years he has been absent from no service in this church Sabbath morning, Sabbath afternoon, or Sabbath evening, or in the lecture-room Wednesday evening or Friday evening, except when he was sick, which was not once a year; or when he was out of town, which was very seldom; or when he was called away by some imperative duty, which did not occur three times a year. I know of no other record at all superior to his for fidelity. It is my custom in the lecture-room always to begin service within a minute of the time, and such was Mr. Benson's punctuality that, again and again, when I have taken my place and opened the hymn-book to give out the hymn, and have seen his seat vacant, I have instantly said, "My watch is too fast." I could easier distrust an excellent watch than I could distrust Mr. Benson's punctuality. When he became a member of the church it was with the purpose to do the duties of a church-member, and when I asked him if he would lead us in prayer in the lecture-room, he said, "Yes." And this

congregation can bear testimony to his growth in the gift and the grace of audible prayer. It required no little resolution in a man of his age to begin such a service; but always in his words of counsel and exhortation every one was interested, and every one was instructed.

Fellow-men, look on that coffin, and see there the incarnation of fidelity! Worldly men, look on that coffin, and see the remains of a model Christian man whose faith knew no wavering!

More than one person has recalled to my mind the last prayer that he made in the lecture-room, ten days ago, when, warming as his emotions stirred and the thoughts brightened before his eye, he rose to an exultant shout, as he cried, "There is, therefore, now, no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." It was the victor's shout that closed his voice forever on our ears. Members of this church, never again this side of the grave shall we hear his voice; never again will you see his form in yonder pew, or bearing about the emblems of a Saviour's dying love! But we can, at least, thank God for the gift of such a man, and we can, one and all, members of this church, or of any church, members of these boards and committees that do the angels' work of charity in this city, all of us, resolve that in fidelity we will try to imitate him.

I close with saying what I feel from the bottom of my heart, that next to the gift of the Holy Ghost, to convict and convert and sanctify, God has no better blessing to give this church and the churches of the various denominations here represented than such men as Gustavus S. Benson.

We will sing the Thirty-first Chant in the Hymnal, and, after this, Dr. J. Addison Henry, who represents the Central Presbytery, and who also was associated with Mr. Benson for many years in the old Home Mission Board in this city, in which association and other like associations they became very tenderly united, will occupy a few moments with remarks.

The congregation then sang the chant beginning,

“One sweetly solemn thought comes to me o’er and o’er.

ADDRESS OF THE REV. DR. J. ADDISON HENRY

I WAS not in the city when the intelligence of the death of our friend, Mr. Benson, reached me. I came home to-day, sooner than I had expected, to attend this funeral, thinking perhaps that I should be called upon, as it had been intimated to me, to take some part in these services, but not this part. And yet I do not know but I have a right to speak a few words in memory of Mr. Benson, because he was my friend. I loved him, and I think I have some reason to believe that he loved me. We do not like mere eulogiums upon these occasions, and yet I think that at such times it is natural to refer to the virtues of our departed friends. As we pass down these streets, after they are taken from us, we constantly think of them and of their many virtues; we dwell upon these, and I believe in dwelling upon them we benefit ourselves, we become better men, and we resolve, God helping us, that we will lead better lives. Therefore, I am sure that as we remember Gustavus S.

Benson, and as we dwell upon his many virtues, our souls shall be benefited. We shall grow wiser and stronger, and we shall become better men.

Little did I think, when so short a time ago I stood in front of this pulpit upon a most joyous occasion, when he presided upon the twenty-fifth anniversary of your pastor, that so soon I should be called upon to pay this last tribute of respect to his memory.

And little did I think, when in the rooms of the Board of Publication, just about three weeks ago, after the close of the meeting, he came to me and took me by the hand, and I received, as I always did, his words of good cheer and of comfort and encouragement, that within three weeks I should be standing here to speak these words in regard to my friend.

But thus it is in the history of this world. Little did I imagine, as in my study I stood a few weeks since before a photograph containing the faces of the members of the old Board of Domestic Missions, that this friend should be so soon taken away. I recollect, very distinctly, that as I looked at that picture I thought particularly of Mr. Benson, because he gave it to me, and I thought, "Who shall be the next one that will be taken away?" Up to that time only one had been removed by death,—the venerable Dr. Musgrave; but I did not suppose that the next one would be my dear friend, Mr. Benson. But so it is, and we are here to-day, gathered together, to hear and to speak these tender and true words in regard to him.

Dr. Breed has said that Mr. Benson was faithful. Truly that was the type of his character. He was a faithful man.

He feared God, and he was distinguished for many virtues ; but, above them all, this characteristic stood boldly out in his life. Those of you who were associated with him in the Board of City Trusts are ready to say that he was a very faithful man. Just think of this. Here was a man who went from house to house visiting the families of those boys who were gathered together in that great institution under your charge, and he was the man who was willing to undertake this arduous work because it was expected that it should be done by some member of your Board. He did it, and he did it faithfully. He did it from day to day, and from week to week, and it was, as all of us who are ministers must know, a very great work. When we go from house to house in the afternoon of each day, we return home often very much fatigued ; and we are especially wearied if we are called to visit those whose wants must be unmistakably met. We all know how tired we are when we have been engaged only for a day or two in that manner in purely charitable work. There are very few men who are engaged in business pursuits who are willing to enter upon these various departments of work in society ; but our friend was willing, and he performed his duties most efficiently and faithfully. This was only one of the various branches of work in which he was engaged, and it seemed enough for one man to do ; but he not only did this, but he was also active in many other labors. I recollect that in the old Board of Domestic Missions he was always there, and what an influence his punctual attendance had upon other and younger members of the Board ! Yes ; he was *always* there, and always ready to work, ready to attend

to the duties of that special engagement, and at once ready to go about his work in some other direction as soon as that meeting was over. And that was true, also, of his connection with the Board of Publication. You who are members of that Board well know that he was always in his place in that Board, and always ready to do the work which was laid upon him faithfully and honestly. *He was a faithful man.*

But he was not only a very faithful man, he was also a very benevolent man. I do not suppose that these men here who are in business, or that even others present who are in positions to be informed, know how much that man did for the poor, and how much he did for the church of the living God. I think that there was hardly a missionary of our branch of the church who came from the great West to collect funds for his church but went to him; and few, if any, came away empty-handed. I speak what I do know. If any missionary, seeking aid for the church, came to one of our ministers in this city, he was almost sure to be sent to Mr. Benson for aid, and we always sent to him because we knew that he was willing to give. I confess that within the past six weeks I advised a brother to seek help from Mr. Benson, and I have since found that that brother came away rejoicing. Sometimes I used to think that we were imposing upon our friend; but I do believe, after all, that he esteemed it a great privilege to give of that which the Lord had given to him as to a steward, and surely he was a good steward of the Lord's bounty.

I recollect, very distinctly, the last time I called upon him for such a purpose. It was upon the occasion of the

fiftieth anniversary of the Rev. Dr. Hodge, in Princeton, and it was at the advice of the late Rev. Dr. Boardman that I went to Mr. Benson. I shall never forget the kind and affectionate way in which I was received. There is a way of being benevolent that repels you, but that was not Mr. Benson's way. I recollect that at that time I went from that man's house saying, "Well, it must be a luxury to have money to give, because this good man really seems to love to give of his." This, then, was another characteristic of our friend. He was a *very* benevolent man. He was both faithful and benevolent; but, as I have already intimated, he was a *kind man*. I might dwell upon this, a prominent trait of his character, but I do not have the time.

And he was *good*. Yes; he was a good man. We do not doubt that. He was accustomed to associate with good men. I think Mr. Morris Patterson, one of Mr. Benson's warmest friends, was one of the best men I have known in this world. I recollect, a number of years ago, of being with Mr. Patterson at the Synod of Philadelphia, at Easton. At that time we were thrown together in the same room, and at night we slept upon the same couch; and I shall never forget how he led me in prayer before retiring, and I shall never forget, also, his advice to me, as a young man. I think I loved him almost as I could have loved a brother. Oh! it was a blessed thing to be constantly associated with such a man. And he was Mr. Benson's chosen friend. But Mr. Benson was an active business man, and while he was "not slothful in business," he was also "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." He took the deepest interest in all re-

ligious matters. I remember once when Mr. Benson was called upon to lead in prayer at one of the meetings of the Synod of Philadelphia, when there was a great deal of religious interest manifested among the people of the town where the Synod convened. His prayer at that time made an impression upon me that I shall never forget; there was such earnestness, such unction in this good man's prayer.

Yes; he was a good man. And, oh, what a loss he will be to this church! I was with this brother during a part of my last vacation, and it seemed to me that he could talk of nothing else but of the West Spruce Street Church. When he was done talking of other things, he would turn at once to speak of his church, of his dear pastor, of the elders, and the board of trustees. He loved you, my dear friends; you may rest assured of that. And if ever any church has ever met with an irreparable loss, it has been the West Spruce Street Church in the loss of these two good men, Morris Patterson and Gustavus S. Benson. We are glad to-day that Mr. Benson lived as many years as he did. The Lord gave him a long life. He has said, "With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation." And he sees this very moment, I believe it firmly, the glorious salvation of his God.

His life was peculiarly long. Some lives are longer than others, because they are fruitful in good deeds. His life was a life of this kind. And these few words, which I think were written by Bonar, illustrate a spirit, of which, in his life, our brother, Mr. Benson, exemplified the sentiment:

“He liveth long who liveth well,
All other life is short and vain;
He liveth longest who can tell
Of living most for heavenly gain.
He liveth long who liveth well,
All else is being flung away;
He liveth longest who can tell
Of true things truly done each day.”

PRAYER BY THE REV. DR. J. H. MASON KNOX

HELP, Lord; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men. Beneath the weight of this great bereavement we cry unto Thee, not to complain, not to murmur; but we come to Thee, with chastened and subdued hearts, to give thanks and praise. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to His abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.

We thank Thee, O Lord, our God, that we do know that our friend whom we mourn has entered upon this glorious inheritance. We thank Thee for all the way by which Thou didst lead him in life. We thank Thee for the grace and the mercy which Thou didst show unto him, especially in bringing him, with the power of the Holy Spirit, to the

knowledge of Thyself, to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and to the acceptance of Him as his Saviour and Master.

And we thank Thee for the grace which Thou didst show him in enabling him so faithfully to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, to go about doing good. And we bless Thee that he hath thus witnessed the great profession of Christ. Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth : yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors ; and their works do follow them.

We pray Thee, O Lord, grant the sanctifying power of Thy Spirit in connection with this bereavement. Bless all those with whom he has been associated during his long life of faithfulness, and grant that they may be, as he was, followers of Christ, even in secular affairs.

We commend unto Thee, O Lord, this church from whom Thou has taken one who was faithful in all his relations ; and we thank Thee that Thou didst enable him to be of such great service to the house of God, and to the people of God, and that Thou didst lay so bountifully unto his hand. We now commend the church bereaved unto Thee, O God, and unto the Spirit, and unto his Word ; and we pray that those may be raised up from the midst of the people upon whom his mantle shall fall, and who shall imitate his blessed example.

We pray Thee, O Lord, to have in Thy most holy keeping the household bereaved. Be Thou the God of the widow, and the Father of the fatherless, in Thy holy habitation.

And, now, bless us. Grant us, O Lord, now, as we go away from Thy house, carrying these inanimate remains of

him whom we loved, to commit them into' the care of Him who says, "I am the resurrection and the life," to feel that we sorrow not as others who have no hope; for, if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, so them, also, who sleep in Him will God bring with Him. Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. Thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Accept our prayers. Answer us in peace, and grant that for us all to live may be Christ, but for us to die may be gain. And unto God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, the God of our salvation, we will give present and eternal praise. Amen!

And, now, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen!

MEMORIAL RESOLUTIONS

PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF
CITY TRUSTS

AT a special meeting of the Board of Directors of City Trusts, held on the 23d day of March, 1883, the death of Mr. Gustavus S. Benson was announced to the Board by the President, who referred in a few words to the honorable record of his services in the direction of the City Trusts.

Whereupon, on motion, the Mayor of the city and the President and Vice-President of the Board of Directors of City Trusts were appointed a committee to prepare a minute in relation to their late esteemed associate, to be entered upon the minutes of the Board at its next stated meeting. The Board then adjourned to attend his funeral.

At the stated meeting of the Board of City Trusts, held April 11, 1883, the following minute, in relation to their late fellow-member, was presented by the committee appointed for that purpose :

Mr. Gustavus S. Benson died on the morning of Thursday, the 22d of March, 1883, in the seventy-seventh year of his age.

For thirteen years he had been associated with the Board of Directors of City Trusts, having been one of the original appointments of the Board of Judges, and was also called upon to act as chairman at the first meeting for organization of the Board. He then accepted the position of chairman of the Committee on Admission, Discipline, and Discharge of the Girard College, and in that capacity visited, with but few exceptions, all accessible homes of the twenty-five hundred children, applicants for admission, whose names have been recorded during thirteen years of his service, a duty performed with a zeal which the pleasure of leading suffering children to a higher, happier sphere of useful life could alone inspire.

He has also for thirteen years been a member of the Committee of the Girard Estate within the city of Philadelphia; since 1877 a member of the Committee of Finance; always a member of the Executive Committee; and had but lately energetically entered upon new duties in the Committee on Wills Hospital and Minor Trusts. Thus there was no portion of the work of the trustees which was not within the scope of his observation, much of it being under his direct management.

Mr. Benson's performance of his duty was of no ordinary character. It may be safely asserted that at no audit of accounts did a bill or charge pass his investigation without notice and explanations if needed, and the consciousness of his fidelity, accuracy, and patient examination assured the correctness of every item passed under his supervision.

When we look back upon his past work and his relations with the Board; a sense of his uniform kindness and

courtesy; a desire to avoid giving pain even when misconstrued in some effort to make perfectly clear the integrity of our action; a sense of his constant self-devotion and untiring industry, working in quiet and without self-assertion, yet in due time felt and appreciated, all united, impress our minds and call for acknowledgment of his merit and our loss.

When we are of the earth, earthy, when human interests, ambition, hopes, and doubts surround us, the better judgment of man is obscured; but when such clouds are rolled away, and character is seen in the pure brightness of heavenly light, we can feel with painful sorrow how near we have been to all that is lovely, to all that is worthy in human life.

It is not necessary to go beyond our relations as trustees for impressions of his character, although most of us have known him long and well as endeared in other fields of usefulness, among which much could be added of his interest in the cause of high education and pure moral and religious instruction as a trustee of Princeton Seminary, and of generous benefactions given with no stint of hand or regard to desire of worldly acquisition when the nobility of the end to be obtained was the fond desire of his heart; but, in view alone of the relations of this Board during the past thirteen years, we deeply deplore the loss of his sagacity, industry, and example as a guide to our labors, knowing as far as human beings can know that he has passed from us to a life immortal, of sure and happy reward.

On motion, it was resolved that the proceedings of the Board be engrossed under the direction of Professor Becker

at the Girard College, and then presented to the family of the deceased, signed by the members of the Board of Directors of City Trusts.

In confirmation of the foregoing proceedings, we have hereunto affixed our respective signatures :

MAYOR OF PHILADELPHIA.

SAMUEL G. KING.

PRESIDENT SELECT COUNCIL.

WILLIAM B. SMITH.

PRESIDENT COMMON COUNCIL.

WM. HENRY LEX.

PRESIDENT BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF CITY TRUSTS.

A. BIDDLE.

VICE-PRESIDENT.

W. HEYWARD DRAYTON.

MEMBERS.

JAMES CAMPBELL,
CHARLES H. T. COLLIS,
J. H. MICHENER,
HENRY M. PHILLIPS,
JAMES L. CLAGHORN,

B. B. COMEGYS,
WILLIAM B. MANN,
LOUIS WAGNER,
JOS. L. CAVEN,
GEO. H. STUART.

CHARLES T. MILLER,

SECRETARY.

THE FRANKLIN FIRE INSURANCE COMPANY

AT a special meeting of the Board of Directors, held Monday, March 26, 1883, the following preamble and resolutions were unanimously adopted :

Whereas, Our late associate director, Gustavus S. Benson, has been taken from our midst, after a short illness, by an all-wise God, and, as we desire to enter upon our minutes a tribute of our high esteem for him as a man, a friend, and a citizen :

Resolved, That in the unexpected death of Gustavus S. Benson, we acknowledge the great loss to this corporation of a colleague who was always constant to his duty, and experienced in all the surroundings of a member of this directorate. We knew him as an able co-worker of courteous manners, interwoven with decision of character and unflinching integrity. We mourn his loss, as a consistent Christian, a conscientious citizen, and the urbane patron of

all that was wise to be done, always laboring with earnestness of purpose for the general good.

Resolved, That we bow with fitting sorrow to this bereavement with which the Almighty has visited us, in the full belief that our deceased Christian colleague has passed away from earth to the full enjoyment of that rest which knows no end. He was wise in his day; his life was a beautiful picture of good counsel to those who still tread the same weary road to death; he heeds not, he hears not; his pilgrimage days are now over.

“God’s finger touched him, and he slept.”

Resolved, That this Board sincerely sympathize with the family of Mr. Benson, and tender to them our heartfelt condolence.

Resolved, That this Board will pay the last tribute of respect by attending his funeral in a body.

E. T. CRESSON,

SECRETARY.

THE SESSION OF THE WEST SPRUCE STREET PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

THE Session has learned with profound sorrow of the death of Gustavus Smith Benson, on Thursday morning, March 22, 1883.

He was elected a ruling elder of this church on the 28th day of September, 1870, and was duly ordained to the office on the 2d day of October, 1870. Since his induction into the office he has discharged all of his duties with a punctuality, diligence, and spirituality rarely equalled and never excelled. At all the church meetings on the Lord's Day, and at the weekly services he was always present, almost to the day of his death, unless detained by providential causes, and these were rare. His absence was ever the occasion of remark, so singularly faithful was he in his attendance. In the weekly meetings he bore his full part, doing his duty as a leader in the prayers of the people, or speaking earnest words of exhortation, and lifting up his voice continually in

the songs of praise. Diffident by nature, his sense of duty compelled him to overcome his shrinking from taking any part in the public services, so that during many years past he was enabled by Divine grace to lead most acceptably in the devotions of God's people. In all the gatherings of the congregation, of every kind, he was sure to be one of them, and his familiar and benignant face will be missed from our lectures, prayer-meetings, Dorcas societies, and social gatherings. But in the meetings of our Session his loss will be felt by us to be greatest. He was wise in counsel, gentle in his treatment of the trembling applicants for admission to church-membership, clear in his perception of the true work of God in the human heart, and firm in the discharge of his duties as a ruling elder in God's house. Although decided in his views, he was ever ready to yield to the judgment of others when prudence and sound reason commended different conclusions from those he had himself reached, so that in all the deliberations in this Session in which he so uniformly participated there never was a divided vote. Lovely in his Christian faith and disposition, his presence with us was always a joy; his absence was a felt abstraction of what was needed to make our communion entirely complete. As clerk of the Session for many years, his record as such in its minutes is a model for all his successors, and, like all that he did, was, humanly speaking, irreproachable.

We feel that what has been said is high praise; more, however, might be said; less would have been unjust to his memory, and untrue to our appreciation of his many Christian virtues, and to the grace of his God which made him

what we knew him to be,—a true, loving, generous, faithful Christian brother.

The clerk is directed to send a copy of this minute to Mr. Benson's family.

A true copy from the minutes.

HENRY D. SHERRERD,

CLERK OF SESSION.

MINUTE OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE WEST SPRUCE
STREET PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

AT a special meeting of the Board of Trustees of the West Spruce Street Presbyterian Church, held on Friday evening, March 23, 1883, the following minute on the decease of their President, Gustavus S. Benson, Esq., was unanimously adopted and ordered to be published:

As an imperfect expression of their sense of the loss sustained in the death of their President, the Board of Trustees of the West Spruce Street Presbyterian Church direct the following minute to be entered on the record of their proceedings:

It has pleased God in His mysterious yet all-wise Providence to deprive this Board of its honored head, and this church of a valued and faithful member and ruling elder, Gustavus S. Benson.

At a congregational meeting, held on the 3d day of May,

1858, not quite a quarter of a century ago, Mr. Benson was elected one of the Trustees of this church, a position which he continuously held up to the time of his death, for many years doing faithful service as Secretary. Since January, 1879, he has been President of the Board, directing with love and wisdom the temporal affairs of our beloved church, serving efficiently in its most important matters, and honoring as well himself as the church in this service. He gave us, most faithfully and conscientiously, unsparingly and lavishly of his time, energy, and means; ever ready to sacrifice pleasure and business for the welfare of this church, so dear to his heart; and his mature counsel, wisdom, and judgment were ever at the disposal of his fellow-laborers. His taste and liberality added to the beauty and adornment, the comfort and convenience of our church building, which was his especial care and pride.

Ever faithful in all things; sincere and fervent in his piety, evincing his faith by its working of love; bright, cheerful, courteous, and pleasant in all his relations with us, his absence will be an irreparable loss. But we thank God that we had him for the little while that it was His pleasure. We are all the better for having known him, for having labored with him in the Master's vineyard, whence he has now gone to his reward.

As a Board of Trustees we experience a heartfelt sorrow in the death of our presiding officer and adviser, our associate and friend; and we desire to place on record this expression of our deep indebtedness to the sound judgment and large-heartedness, to the munificence and devotion to the

interests of the West Spruce Street Presbyterian Church, of Gustavus S. Benson.

We would extend our warmest sympathies to the widow and children of Mr. Benson; and, while recognizing that theirs is the larger sorrow and the greater loss, we desire to express to them our grief and consciousness of bereavement, and therefore instruct the Secretary to transmit to them a copy of this minute.

CHARLES O. ABBEY,

SECRETARY.

THE PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION

THIS Board of Publication with sincere sorrow records the death of its late member, Mr. Gustavus S. Benson.

His many and long-continued services to the cause which it represents, his fidelity to the church and to the important trusts which the church imposed upon him, his ample yet quiet liberality, his large business experience and skill, his well-balanced judgment, his consideration for the opinion of others while intelligently urging his own, his wise counsel, his consistent Christian conduct, and his genial companionship make the loss which this Board and the church suffer in his removal larger than can easily be expressed in language. His fellow-members will ever cherish the memory which he has made sacred. His example of earnest, devoted consecration will be to them a help and stimulus.

They follow him to his last resting-place with thanksgiving that they have known him so long and well; while they sorrow deeply that they shall see him no more until the great gathering of the general assembly above.

The above minute was adopted unanimously, March 27, 1883, by the Presbyterian Board of Publication, of which Mr. Benson had been for sixteen years a member.

WILLIAM E. SCHENCK,

CORRESPONDING SECRETARY.

PHILADELPHIA, MARCH 27, 1883.

MRS. G. S. BENSON:

Dear Madam,—I enclose herewith a minute adopted by the Board at its regular monthly meeting on Tuesday last, and which I now transmit to you by its direction. Permit me to add that this minute was adopted not as a merely customary combination of words, but expressed the sincere, heartfelt, and profound feelings of every member who was present. While the paper was under consideration, a number of the members, one after another, addressed the Board with tender emotion, expressing their views of Mr. Benson's exalted worth and valuable services to this Board. Pardon me for adding that I deeply feel a sense of personal loss in the departure of such a friend, and that you have my warmest sympathy.

Respectfully yours,

W. E. SCHENCK,

CORRESPONDING SECRETARY.

THE PENNSYLVANIA BIBLE SOCIETY

AT a meeting of the Board of Managers, held April 12, 1883, the regular order of business was suspended, and the following minute unanimously adopted :

The Board of Managers of the Pennsylvania Bible Society record with unfeigned grief the death, on March 22, 1883, of their associate and friend, Gustavus S. Benson, Esq., in the seventy-seventh year of his age.

Mr. Benson became a manager of this Society May 5, 1869, and at once gave himself with earnestness to its affairs. Until the sudden close of his life he continued to be a faithful, interested, and warm-hearted worker in the Board, always present at its meetings when possible, and always ready to aid it with his mature counsel.

In May, 1882, he was elected Recording Secretary of the Board.

His co-workers put upon record in the minutes of their proceedings their high estimate of their brother in good

works as a man, upright, wise, gentle, charitable, and true, who has entered into rest, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom was all his trust.

THOMAS X. ORR,

SECRETARY PRO TEM.

Extract from the minutes.

JOHN W. DULLES,

CORRESPONDING SECRETARY.

PHILADELPHIA, APRIL 17, 1883.

MRS. G. S. BENSON:

Dear Madam,—Resolutions are often offered and adopted with little heart, but that was not the case at this meeting of our Bible Society.

We all loved Mr. Benson, as he well deserved to be loved. For myself, I miss him painfully, not only there, but here in our Board of Publication, as well as elsewhere. Rarely have I so felt a death outside of my own home circle. Your loss is great; but we must look forward, not backward. Our best-beloved have gone before, and we follow them. With sincere sympathy,

Truly yours,

JOHN W. DULLES.

THE HOWARD HOSPITAL

AT a special meeting of the Board of Managers, held on the 23d March, 1883, to take action in reference to the death of Gustavus S. Benson, Esq., the following minute was adopted, and ordered to be spread on the Hospital Records :

The Board of Managers, having had communicated to them the death of Mr. Gustavus S. Benson, which occurred on Thursday, the 22d instant, and desiring to put on record their estimate of his worth to the hospital as a manager, and their regard for him as a man, would express their sincere sorrow at his unexpected departure as of a very valued associate, whose uniformly pleasant and kindly intercourse must make his absence from their body to be long and keenly felt.

As a member of the Board, he, throughout the whole twenty years of his service, showed an unwavering interest in the welfare of the hospital, attending its meetings with

marked regularity, welcoming warmly every measure promising to increase its usefulness, and contributing liberally to its support himself, besides laboring earnestly to secure contributions to it from others, in which last service he was remarkably successful.

The loss of such a manager to any institution is a serious one, and the Board of the Howard Hospital deplore theirs accordingly.

They offer their sincere condolence to the family of their late friend, and will pay their respects to his memory by attendance at his funeral.

WM. R. CLAXTON,

SECRETARY.

NOTICES FROM THE PRESS

[AN EDITORIAL IN THE PHILADELPHIA EVENING BULLETIN OF 22D MARCH, 1883.]

The death of Gustavus S. Benson, Esq., removes a very well known and very useful citizen of Philadelphia. Mr. Benson was the surviving member of the once leading firm of bankers and brokers that bore his name. He has been retired from active business life for some years past, but by no means from the active duties of good citizenship. One of the most important posts held by Mr. Benson was that of a Director of City Trusts, a position to which he has devoted a large part of his time and ability. He was deeply interested in the management of Girard College, and was present in its chapel so recently as on the occasion of the inauguration of President Fetterolf. His clear judgment and well-trained business habits made him a very valuable

member of the Board, where he will be seriously missed and regretted by his colleagues. Mr. Benson was an influential member of the West Spruce Street Presbyterian Church, and was earnestly and practically interested in the promotion of many of the philanthropic and charitable works of this city. In many respects, the places of usefulness that he has long filled will not easily be supplied, and his death may well be reckoned as a loss to the community at large as well as to his wide circle of friends and relatives.

[FROM AN EDITORIAL IN THE NEW YORK OBSERVER OF 5TH APRIL, 1883.]

Gustavus S. Benson, of Philadelphia, who died March 22d, aged seventy-six, was one of the most useful, valued, and honored men in the Presbyterian Church of that city. He was a ruling elder in the church of which Dr. Breed is pastor, and often represented his Presbytery in the higher councils of the Church. Retired from business, with ample fortune, a man of extensive knowledge of the world, and given to hospitality, his house was well known to many Christians from foreign lands who have been entertained by him and his amiable family. He will be deeply mourned by the community that knew him well and esteemed him for his many virtues and his great usefulness. His death is a public calamity, and will afflict the Church in Philadelphia, as here in New York we have felt our recent bereavements.

SORROWS IN THE ELDERSHIP

We do not remember a time when death has smitten so many households on the eldership side of the Church. The whole body must suffer, and this is only what we might expect, for we are bound together in our Christian life by links forged and welded in pain. The Church will now have the blessed opportunity of sympathizing and supporting in intercessory prayer these afflicted households.

The Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia lost an ardent supporter and a wise counsellor when Gustavus S. Benson died last week in the home in which he had dwelt for many years. He was in the seventy-seventh year of his age, and retained much of his vigor to his latest years, though withdrawn largely from the business which he had successfully conducted. To the Church he gave constant and effective service, and was known as a generous contributor to all its missionary and benevolent schemes. He was an elder for many years of the West Spruce Street Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia (Rev. Dr. Breed's), and in this office was a wise guide to the church and a constant helper to his pastor. Mr. Benson was a man of cultivated mind, bred originally to the bar, and was an excellent speaker, showing skill and address whenever called upon. All his gifts and acquirements, as well as his possessions, were consecrated to Christ, and his faithful stewardship closed only with his life. The burial services were held in the West Spruce Street Church

on Monday afternoon of the present week, and the gathering around his coffin was composed of men of the highest standing in the community, as well as of those who in lowlier spheres had felt the touch of his generous hand in times of sorrow and anxiety.

[AN EDITORIAL IN THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL TIMES OF 7TH APRIL, 1883.]

Among the men of large means and of large heart who have recently been removed by death, Mr. Gustavus S. Benson, of Philadelphia, is peculiarly deserving of honorable mention for his exceptional labor of love in connection with Girard College, and the selection of boys for education in that benevolent institution. Mr. Benson had prominence in many spheres of Christian work. He was long an elder in the West Spruce Street Presbyterian Church, of which the Rev. Dr. W. P. Breed is pastor. For more than a score of years he was never absent from any of the regular services of that church, unless kept away by sickness or absence from the city; and so uniformly punctual was he that his pastor has said that if Mr. Benson was not in his place at the moment for opening the service, the pastor was ready to distrust the accuracy of his own watch. And Mr. Benson was also an active manager of the Presbyterian Board of Publication, and of the Pennsylvania Bible Society, and of various other benevolent organizations. But perhaps his more important work than all was in the Board of City

Trusts of Philadelphia, of which he was a member from its creation. That Board controls Girard College. For fully thirteen years Mr. Benson was Chairman of the Committee on Admission and Discharge of Pupils for that institution; and all of the more than eleven hundred boys now in Girard College, and the thousands of others who came in during his administration, were received upon his personal examination. Many of them were, in fact, sought out by him in the streets and lanes of the city; and all of them felt the impress of his personal influence, and had reason to be grateful for his personal kindness and sympathy. When it is considered that the requirements for admission to that institution are rigid, and that only the poor and the fatherless, and those born within certain limits, are eligible, some idea may be formed of the great and good work done by Mr. Benson in this one extensive and peculiar field of personal Christian activity.

[FROM THE PRESBYTERIAN JOURNAL OF 29TH MARCH, 1883.]

EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE

NEW YORK, MARCH 24, 1883.

I left home on Thursday to attend a committee meeting here.

On my way to the cars I was startled to hear of the death of Gustavus S. Benson, Esq. I had seen him but a few days before, and I understand that within the preceding week he

attended a meeting of the Business Committee of the Board of Publication, of which he was a most efficient member. But he then had a cold that ran into pneumonia, which caused his death. Death is reaping a large crop of our rich and liberal Presbyterians, and Mr. Benson is one of the number. The first time I remember to have met him was at an elegant reception which he gave in 1869, I think, to the Joint Reunion Committee of the Old and New School Assemblies. After that I saw him almost monthly at the meetings of the Board of Publication. He was also a member of the Saratoga Assembly, and made there a speech on the business affairs of the Board of Publication, which Dr. Gray, of the *Interior*, singled out for special mention because of its clearness of statement. He was also one of the pillars of the West Spruce Street Church, President of its Board of Trustees and Clerk of its Session. He filled, too, several important civil offices,—the most important, perhaps, as a member of the Philadelphia Board of City Trusts. In all he was noted for his punctuality and conscientious discharge of duty. Years ago I was told by Dr. Breed of the remarkable regularity of his attendance at the church services. The Wednesday lecture and Friday night meeting found him an invariable attendant. At the monthly concert he always had a paper to read on one of the fields as his contribution to the services. He was fitted by his training for his work in all these positions. He graduated at the University of Pennsylvania with the highest honors, studied law, and then went into the banking-house of Alexander Benson & Co., in which, I believe, he continued as an active

partner until 1863. He was wealthy, and used his wealth liberally. I sympathize deeply with my brother Breed, who will greatly miss our mutual friend, and with the widow and four sons and two daughters who have been bereaved. The late Dr. James W. Dale was a brother of Mrs. Benson.

[BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH FROM THE PHILADELPHIA NORTH AMERICAN OF 23D MARCH, 1883.]

GUSTAVUS S. BENSON

Mr. Gustavus S. Benson, a highly-respected and prominent citizen of Philadelphia, died at his residence, 1515 Spruce Street, yesterday morning. A week ago Mr. Benson was prostrated by a very bad cold. His condition was not considered serious, and little fear of his sudden demise was entertained. He grew slowly worse, until his illness assumed the form of congestion of the lungs, and he was taken away suddenly. Although seventy-seven years of age, Mr. Benson was in possession of all his faculties unimpaired. He was a man of vigorous intellect, and in every way remarkably active for a person of his advanced age. He continued to discharge his public duties up to the time he was confined to his bed. He was a native of Baltimore, but came to this city when six years old. In 1823 he was graduated with high honors from the University of Pennsylvania, and not long afterward entered upon the study of law under John

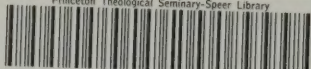
M. Scott, at one time Mayor of Philadelphia. He pursued his studies with the vigor characteristic of him, and in 1827 he was admitted to the bar. Soon after his admission to the bar, however, he abandoned the legal profession, and directed his talents to a field offering better rewards. He entered the banking-house of Alexander Benson, and in a short time became a member of the firm of Alexander Benson & Co. The firm was very successful, and at one time was one of the best known on Third Street, doing a good stock broking and a very large banking business. Mr. Benson soon rose to prominence in the financial world, and became an authority on matters of finance. He retired from active business in 1863, although he has since had an office with his nephew, Edwin N. Benson, at 34 South Third Street. Mr. Benson took an active part in looking to the public welfare, and was for over ten years a member of the Board of City Trusts, and held the position at the time of his death. He was a Director of the Western National Bank for a number of years, and also a Director of the Franklin Fire Insurance Company. He filled the position of Manager of the Howard Hospital, and was a member of the Union League from its organization, and also of the University Club. He was an elder in the West Spruce Street Presbyterian Church, President of its Board of Trustees, Clerk of its Session, and member of the Business Committee of the Presbyterian Board of Publication. He was a highly-esteemed gentleman, and his loss will be mourned by the large number that enjoyed his acquaintance. He leaves a widow, four sons, and two daughters.

NOTE.—Of the biographical sketches which appeared in all the newspapers of Philadelphia, and in several of those of New York, the foregoing one was selected to be printed here as sufficiently characteristic.

The sketch in another paper adds: "He was a gentleman of exemplary life, marked liberality toward all good enterprises, and earnestly devoted to the interests of the church with which he had long been connected. As a public-spirited, useful, and generous citizen, and faithful friend and adviser, his loss will be severely felt by the community at large and by his numerous friends."

It has not been from any wish to magnify the reward of public praise earned by one who turned aside in a peculiar measure from all publicity that these notices from the press were included in this volume. And yet to him the good opinion of others was dear,—it was, indeed, essential to his happiness; and they who survive him are grateful for the opportunity of closing these memorials of a quiet life with such testimony of its appreciation by those beyond the immediate circle in which he moved.

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